

Legislative News



April 9, 2010

Legislation to Reboot State Government Moves Forward



[Governor Nixon](#) has proposed creating a single Department of Education. There is general consensus that the way to achieve this change is through constitutional amendments and statutory revisions. It is likely that between now and the end of the legislative session, legislators will consider measures that would put the constitutional amendments on the ballot – either during the August primary election or the November general election – as well as separate measures that would revise or eliminate existing statutes. There is also general consensus that there will have to be two separate constitu-

tional amendments, each voted on separately, in order to accomplish the changes proposed by the Governor.

[Senator Charlie Shields](#) has filed one bill and two resolutions on these topics: [SB 1057](#), [SJR 44](#), and [SJR 45](#). During a hearing on SB 1057 and SJR 44 before the [Senate General Laws Committee](#) Wednesday, Shields acknowledged that those measures are "shell bills" that will become vehicles for some of the broad changes currently being discussed in the Capitol.

SB 1057 may be amended to include statutory changes needed to reconstruct state government. Shields indicated that his vision for SJR 44 is that it will take on language that will merge [DESE](#) and the [MDHE](#) in state statute. He said that the merger is a good idea – not simply as a money-saving measure, but to encourage genuine P-20 collaboration, performance measures and accountability, and control in higher education that is somewhat like the relationship between DESE and K-12 institutions. He envisions the creation of a board that is representative in terms of geography and educational sector.

Senate General Laws Committee members voted to pass on both bills

Wednesday, so they will now advance for consideration by the Senate at large.

In addition to these measures considered by the committee, Senator Shields has filed SJR 45. SJR 45 would modify the State Board of Education. Currently, the existing State Board only oversees K-12 public schools. The bill summary for SJR 45 indicates that this resolution would grant the Board supervision of instruction of the entire public education system. The number of members on the board would be the same as the number of congressional districts (nine), with one member appointed from each district. No more than five members could be from the same political party. In addition, at least one member must have a background in higher education, one must have a background in elementary and secondary education, and one must have a background in early childhood education.

Governor Names New Board Member

Governor Nixon has reappointed Ronald Dirck Clark to the [Missouri Western State University Board of Governors](#). Clark's appointment will now have to be confirmed by the Senate.

Scholarship Consolidation Continues to Move Forward

This week, [Representative Jake Zimmerman's HB 1858](#), which would officially bring the Minority and Underrepresented Environmental Literacy Program from [DNR](#) to the MDHE, was heard by the [Senate Education Committee](#). The Minority and Underrepresented Environmental Literacy Program was assigned to the MDHE through the budget process last year, so the department is currently administering the program. HB 1858 would simply make that transfer official and permanent.



Update on the MDHE Budget

The [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) completed its work on the higher education budget this week. The most significant change was that the committee cut higher education institutional operating budgets by \$14.8 million, the maximum allowed by the maintenance of effort provisions of the federal stimulus package.

If this reduction were to be included in the final budget that goes to the Governor in May, it would effectively nullify the tuition freeze agreement between the governor and the institutions. The [SB 389](#) tuition constraint limit for the upcoming year is 2.7%, with slightly higher increases allowed for institutions whose tuition is below the average.

Access Bills Advance in the House

[Representative Gayle Kingery's HB 1812](#), which would change [Access Missouri](#) award amounts starting in 2014-15, was sent back to the [House Higher Education Committee](#) last week with instructions to harmonize it with the most recent compromise supported in the Senate. The committee considered the bill again this Tuesday, and approved a new committee substitute that increases the maximum award for community college students by \$50, includes a provision that allows lower-division students to receive renewal awards if they maintain a 2.0 grade point average, and eliminates the provision of the current statute that would

Last week the Senate Committee also eliminated the \$6.5 million increase added by the House for [Bright Flight](#), and cut an additional \$6.5 million from [Access Missouri](#) beyond the \$6.5 million the House had already cut.

The entire budget will now move to the Senate floor where all items are subject to change, and then items on which there is a discrepancy between the House and Senate positions will be sent to a conference committee for final resolution before being sent to the governor. May 7 is the deadline for delivering the budget to the governor.

"sunset" the program unless reauthorized in 2013. The bill will now be returned to the House Rules Committee.

[Representative Mike Thomson's HB 1473](#) also advanced this week. The bill, which contains the language allowing lower division students to get renewal awards if they maintain a 2.0 GPA that has since been rolled into HB 1812 and will likely be part of the Senate bill on Access award amounts, was voted out of the [House Rules Committee](#). The bill may now be taken up by the entire House.

New Higher Education Legislation

[HCR 80 Flanigan](#) (R - Carthage)

Creates the Joint Interim Committee on Reducing the Size of State Government.

[SJR 45 Shields](#) (R - St. Joseph)

Modifies the State Board of Education.